# Strophes of Ömar Khayyám

# THE STROPHES

OF

# OMAR KHAYYÁM

TRANSLATED FROM THE PERSIAN

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.

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# Introduction.

*Quant aux Utilitaires, Utopistes, Économistes, Saint-Simonistes et autres qui lui demanderont à quoi cela rime,—il répondra : le premier vers rime avec le second, quand la rime n'est pas mauvaise, et ainsi de suite.*

*Theophile Gautier.*

# INTRODUCTION.

OMAR KHAYYÁM was born in the first half of the eleventh century of our era at Naishápúr, a small town in the Province of Khorasan, a place which modern travelers describe as singularly uninteresting, but which at that time was of no little importance. The details which we possess of his life are exceedingly meagre, but doubtless true. His boyhood was entirely uneventful. He completed his studies at the *Madrassah* of Naishápúr, an institution celebrated for the number of noted men who had there received their education, in the year 1042. While at school his two most intimate friends were Nizám-ul-Mulk and Hassan-Sabbáh, both of whom afterwards became celebrated in their country's history.

One day, little imagining the influence it was destined to have on their careers, they jokingly entered into a boyish compact; according to the terms of this agreement the one who should be most highly favored by fortune was to interest himself in the advancement of his comrades. Their

biographers relate that it had the effect of stimulating their zeal, each applying himself to his studies most assiduously. It was not long before the treaty was put to the test, for Nizám-ul-Mulk was called to a position in the government, and his companions immediately demanded the fulfillment of their oath. Hassan-Sabbáh, ambitious, jealous and crafty, was given a place at Court, while Omar, who seems to have been of a studious and retiring disposition, was in accordance with his request, made chief of his village.

Living quietly at Naisházpúr, he pursued his favorite studies of philosophy, mathematics and poetry, and became a philosopher, a skeptic and a fatalist

Following the custom of Persian poets, he adopted a *Takhallus* or poetical name, choosing that of Khayyám, an appellation suggested by the trade of his father, which was that of a tent-maker. His countrymen say that his extreme modesty prevented him from assuming a more pretentious name, the Oriental poets, as a rule, sharing the proverbial modesty of their class, thus, Firdusi, the "Celestial," Hafiz, the "Preserver," Saadi, the "Felicitous."

The chroniclers relate that Omar was fond of spending the evening on the terrace before his house, in company with his friends, surrounded by musicians, and drinking wine, which was presented

in turn to all the symposiasts by the Sáki or cup-bearer, a custom which still prevails in the East.

He seems to have passed through those days with the indolence and indifference of a god; places of honor were offered him by the government, but he preferred to spend his time in a vain search for some rhyme for the reason of things, although he well knew that his aim was unattainable.

His death occurred in the year 1123 of the Christian era.

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The various manuscripts [the texts used in this translation were Whinfield's, Nicolas', and the lithographed edition of Lucknow] contain more than a thousand quatrains ascribed to Omar, although in this number there is constant repetition of ideas expressed in slightly varying diction. It is impossible to tell how many of these are spurious, for it is highly probable that many have crept into later editions, having been added by over-zealous copyists unable to accept Omar's philosophy, or by readers who scribbled antagonistic strophes on the margins of their copies, which afterwards found their way into the text; this supposition is supported by the fact that in the larger collections contradictory stanzas often are found on the same page. The *Rubáiyát*, a poetic form in great favor in the East, seems peculiarly suited to Omar's

thoughts. In the original, the first, second and fourth lines rhyme, though all four verses may do so; and some twenty-four different meters are in use. The only respect in which the form of the translation agrees with the Persian is in leaving the third line blank.

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It is a difficult question to decide what was Omar's real philosophy. He probably suffered periodic attacks of metaphysics with accompanying changes in his beliefs; but unfortunately the arbitrary arrangement of the original, which is in accordance with the alphabetical order of rhymes, offers no clue to the chronological sequence or development of his ideas.

It is well nigh impossible for an Occidental to accept the mystic interpretation of M. Nicolas, and judging by his notes it seems as if he too had grave misgivings regarding poor Omar's character. However, while the old Tent-maker doubtless was human, it is not likely that he was past redemption. He drank wine as he sang of it, and it is probable that his morals were little, if any, in advance of his age and country, but his vices go hand in hand with great virtues; throughout his *Rubáiyát* there breathes a spirit of charity and toleration towards his opponents, and an independence in thought, unusual in his time and in an Oriental

land. A skeptic regarding the creeds prevalent, he tore down but does not seem to have supplanted with anything better. He recognized the weakness of the human intellect when struggling with the questions of human destiny, at the same time regarding that destiny as implacable, a belief formulated throughout his writings in an Eastern fatalism.

Insomuch as there is a vein of Pantheism in his poems he may be regarded as a Súfi, but his Súfism is not the kind which the professors of the creed would have us believe, and his wine, woman and song are doubtless no less real than were the material inspirations of Anacreon, Horace and Beranger.

While Omar's fatalism and indifference may to many seem pernicious, thrusting themselves forward in such a manner that they cannot be overlooked, the effect of the whole is, as Mr. Fitzgerald says, more apt to move sorrow than anger towards the old Tent-maker.

Omar in the Twelfth Century belonged to the class of thinkers which includes the Agnostic of to-day. Recognizing the intenability of the doctrines taught by the various Mohammedan sects, he did not refrain from assailing them with ridicule; he seems to have thought with a modern French writer, that the value of a religion depends upon

its harmony, more or less complete, with the precepts taught by the reason and with the facts established by science. [Les Religions de l'Extrême Orient, Léon de Rosny, 1886.] By his contemporaries he was regarded as a Freethinker and a Scoffer, and it was not until long after his death, probably when the examples furnished by his way of living had ceased, that the Súfis discovered the deep spiritual meaning of his Bacchanalian verses. That they did make this discovery, however, need not surprise us, for the Oriental mind, like the Oriental languages, as Mr. Huxley has remarked, is exceedingly subtle, and the Súfi of the East, as an expounder of the obscure, is no less adroit than the Theologian of the West.

"Si la foi vient de Dieu, c'est aussi de Lui que vient la raison," was doubtless one of the articles of Omar's creed, whatever his religion may have been, for he never tired of attacking the unreasonable and absurd. He felt a contempt for hollow ceremonial, and he scorned hypocracy and deceit. Clemency and generosity, not vengeance and wrath, were worthy of the Divine; infinite mercy was incompatible with the Mohammedan doctrine of future punishments, while infinite power was opposed to the more modern theory of free-will.

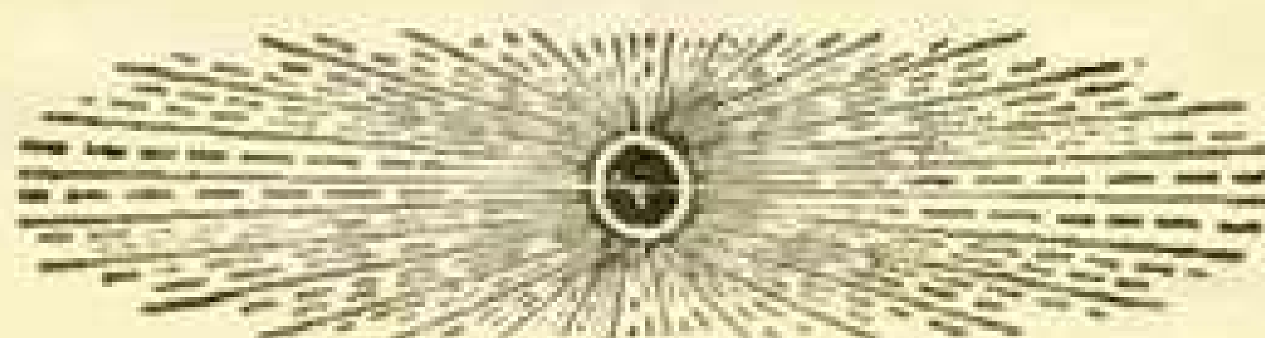
The shortness and uncertainty of life and the

instability of earthly affairs, were ever in his thoughts. His appreciation of the unavoidable separation from things mundane, and the fewness of his wants, led him to disregard wealth and honors. Frequently a vein of pessimism crops out in his writings, but it is of a healthy aggressive sort, very different from the article which the pseudo-pessimists of the day, in their solemn seasons of reflection upon their individual ills, are wont to style truth ; Omar was a precurser of Schopenhauer, rather than of Leopardi.

In the selections which follow, accuracy of translation was the principal aim ; the collection might have been made much larger, but it was deemed inadvisable, as Omar's themes are not many, and the ever-recurring Wine, Rose, and Nightingale are somewhat cloying to Occidental senses.

The great questions of human life are of all times and of all ages, and although Omar never tired of struggling with them, he discovered nothing new, and at last, feeling that Death alone was certain, he resigned the task in despair, exclaiming to his pupil, Nizámi, 'I shall soon be buried where the North wind will strew roses over my grave,' and Nizámi wondered greatly at the words, for in the Koran it is written that no man knoweth where he shall be buried ; but, a few years later,

returning to Naishápúr, to visit the last resting place of his Master, he found it close beside a garden-wall, and he noticed that the blossoms had fallen from the spreading branches and completely hidden the tomb from view.



# Strophes.

With sparkling wine sweet roses join
'T will make the nectared draught divine;
Let Mirth and Laughter rule the hour,
While roses plucked from Love's own bower,
Around our moistened temples twine,
And add fresh fragrance to the wine.

—*Bourne's Anacreon.*

I.

The Herald of the Morn, in lusty tone,
Loud greets the Dawn upon her Golden Throne,
Again proclaiming to a Slumbering World,
Another Night beyond recall has flown.

II.

Arise oh Sáki,[1] the Sunlight in is creeping,
The Drowsy soon will fall to Death's sure Reaping,
Come tune thy Harp, and fill a Sparkling Measure,—
Not One will ere return of all the Sleeping.

III.

The Flowers upon the breeze their fragrance fling,
The Bulbul's notes within the thicket ring,
Ah come recline beneath the Rose-tree's shade,—
The Rose that once has blown must die with Spring.

IV.

Come take thy Lute and seek the Verdant Plain,
With Countless Houris fair a Laughing Train,
For oft has Heaven brought them into Life,
And turned them back to Lifeless Cups again.

V.

The Violets that by this River grow,
Spring from some Lip here buried long ago ;—
And tread thou lightly on this Tender Green,
Who sleepeth here so still, thou ne'er wilt know.

VI.

Our Souls we gladly sacrifice to Wine,
The Smiling, Laughing Daughter of the Vine,[2]
Yes, Sáki, stand thou ready with the Flask,
And to my Lip the Flowing Cup incline.

VII.

Mid Joyful Dancers and with Wine and Song,
Upon this Mossy Bank the whole Day long
I ask for nothing more,—to think of Hell,
Or e'en of Heaven, would be, methinks, a Wrong.

VIII.

A Flask of Wine, a Loaf of Bread,
To every Care and Worldly Sorrow dead,
I covet not, when thou, oh Love, art near,
The Jeweled Crown upon the Sultan's Head.

IX.

Yon fallen Palace once with Heaven vying,
Where Kings bowed down, is now in ruin lying,
The Ring-dove haunts its desolated courts,
And wails *coo-coo, coo-coo*,[3] forever crying.

X.

Now, here where Bahrám[4] lived in wild carouse,
The Lion sleeps, the Deer are wont to brouse,
Though oft he followed them with bow and Spear,
They never will his Final Slumbers rouse.

XI.

When I am dead, my body wash with Wine,
Sing o'er my tomb the praises of the Vine,
And when the Day of Resurrection dawns,
Commingled with the Tavern's dust, seek Mine.

XII.

'T is said there is a place where Houris throng,
Where we shall drink and list to Lute and Song,
If Paradise such Pleasures offers us,—
To love the like on Earth,—in what the Wrong?[5]

XIII.

In Adoration at the Wine-jar's Lip
We learn a lesson in Good-fellowship,
The moments we have lost in Fruitless Prayer,
We best can find again when Wine we sip.

XIV.

Snow white, like Moses' hand,[6] the Branches grow,
While Clouds rain Tears upon the Earth below,
The opening buds revived by Jesus' breath,
Upon the air their Subtile Fragrance throw.

XV.

Come fill the cup, and quaff this kind Nepenthe,
The Sweetest Gift of all the Gods have sent thee,
For vainly wilt thou seek to find again
The Fleeting Moments which the Fates have lent
thee.

XVI.

Such Homage to the Cup I ere will pay
That when my Body in the Ground they lay,
The Odor of my Wine will overcome
All those who happen by my Tomb to stray.

XVII.

This Tufted Mead is sprinkled by the Rain
With all its Flowers which our Senses chain,—
Ere long the Flowers from our Dust will spring,—
Whose sight will they rejoice? A Question vain.

XVIII.

Why heed the Future's distant Weal or Woe?
Enjoy the Hour, the Morn we ne'er may know;
To-morrow,—we may join that Caravan
Which started Seven Thousand Years ago.[7]

XIX.

With Tales of future pains men threaten me,
They say there is a Hell in store for thee;—
Love, if there is a Hell for all like us,
Their Heaven as empty as my Palm will be.

XX.

Yes, Loved One, when the Laughing Spring is
blowing
With Thee beside me and the Cup o'erflowing,
I pass the day upon this Waving Meadow,
And dream the while, no thought on Heaven
bestowing.

XXI.

Our Life will end, it flies on foot amain,
What boots whether passed in joy or pain
At Balkh or Naishápúr?[8] Come, fill your cup,
We die,—but still the Moon will wax and wane.

XXII.

Love! oh that God would build his World anew
While Aught of Life remains to Me and You,
And that He would our Names obliterate,
Or show more Mercy,—be more Generous too.

XXIII.

Ah, with what Skill Thy Maker's Hand designed
Thee,
And with what Grace and Lovliness combined
Thee;
But oft I wonder why he made thee so,
And then in this poor Earthen Home confined
Thee.[9]

XXIV.

A few short Fleeting Days,—our Life flies fast,
'Tis gone, it flies as flies the Desert-blast,
But yet there are two days of neither Joy
Nor Pain, the Day to come, the Day now past.

XXV.

Oh, might the Vintage Time forever last !
The month of Ramazán[10] not yet has passed,—
But while a Jar of Wine remains to us--
What thinkest Thou that we shall keep the Fast?

XXVI.

To Wisdom's Daughter I was one time wed,
Thereafter Fruitless Dogma shared my bed,
Her too I have divorced now from my roof,
And ta'en the Daughter of the Vine instead.

XXVII.

Come, fill a sparkling Cup and from the Creed
Of One and All the Seventy Sects be freed,[11]
And to the Riddle of Futurity,
The Answer in the Flowing Goblet read.

XXVIII.

The Morn when from my Eve's Carouse I die
I will not sue for Mercy from the Sky,
Yes, Love, for Thee and Wine I still shall yearn,
Though Sinner, Heaven and Hell I will defy.

XXIX.

Soon from the Book of Life our Names shall fade,
And in the Arms of Death we shall be laid,
A little while and we shall turn to Dust,—
Come boy! my glass fill up; be not dismayed.

XXX.

The fears of Death from your Illusions rise,
For Death is but the Door to Paradise,
The Breath of Jesus hath revived my Soul,—
The Tales of Everlasting Death, are Lies.[12]

XXXI.

The Koran's Word, oft called the 'world sublime,'
Is seldom read, and not in every Clime,
But on the Goblet's Rim there is a Verse,
Men read at every place, at every time.[13]

XXXII.

Come bring the Juice whose dazzling Brightness vies
With these same Houris' merry sparkling eyes,
And which, like a Chain with Links of Iron, holds
Within its strong embrace, both Fools and Wise.

XXXIII.

Yes, bid the Sáki fill the Brimming Measure,
And may thy closing days be spent in Pleasure,
For, when thy Dust within the Ground is laid,
'T will ne'er be sought as some long burried Treasure.

XXXIV.

One Morn while sitting by the Taverns' Door
I heard a Voice in Accents Mild Implore,
"Come, fill another Cup with Sparkling Wine,
Make Haste, the Cup of Life will soon run o'er."

XXXV.

In Praise of Wine and Rose my Words shall
ring,
For these alone Forgetfulness bring,
When dead, the bricks that from my Clay are
baked,
May serve to build the Palace of a King.

XXXVI.

Yes, Friend, within the Tavern thou shouldst
dwell,
Forever lost in Wine, for who can tell
The Anguish that our Sober Moments fills,
But when enslaved by Wine,—ah well, ah well!



La vie est ainsi faite, il nous la faut subir.
Le faible souffre et pleure, et l' insensé s'irrite;
Mais le plus sage en rit, sachant qu 'il doit mourir.
Rentre au tombeau muet où l' homme enfin s'abrite,
Et là sans nul souci de la terre et du ciel,
Repose, ô malheureux, pour le temps éternel!

*—Leconte de Lisle.*

I.

Last Night I broke my Cup against a stone,
An Act of Madness I must ere bemoan;—
Ah, knowest thou not, that I was once a Man?
The Fragments asked of me in plaintive tone.

II.

The Cup I prize above the Realms of Tús
The Crown of Kobád or the Throne of Kaiús;[14]
A Lover's Matin Sighs are sweeter far
Than all the Dervish's Sobs and Groans profuse.

III.

Thou hast prepared a Way with many a Snare,
And set with many a Prize to lure us there,
And still, Oh, God 't is said, Thou wilt not spare,
The Man whose Foot-steps stumble unaware!

IV.

Why let Thy Sins of old torment Thee so?
What gain to Thee from all this Crushing Woe?
The Man who God's Commandment ne'er transgressed,
Can ne'er God's All-Forgiving Kindness know.

V.

Oh, Thou who in the Universe Entire
The Object art of all my fond Desire,
Far dearer art Thou than my Quickened Soul,
More precious Thou than Life's Consuming Fire.

VI.

Ah, Spirit Mine, your Life is filled with Sorrow,
A Respite from your Toil you ne'er can borrow,
I know not why you animate this Clay,
Since You must leave forever on the Morrow.

VII.

Of Those who have the "Long Road" travelled
o'er,
Not One will bring Thee News of it, before
Thou too shalt go, and heed Thee that Thou leavest
Without Regret, Thou shalt return no more.

VIII.

Oh that to Heaven's Control I might aspire,
And sweep away this Universe Entire,
Then from the Ruins build Another World,
Where Man might sometimes reach his Heart's
Desire!

IX.

No, From the Future, Hope thou ne'er shouldst
borrow,
The very Thought would fill thy Heart with Sorrow,
Lose not the Present Moment in Repining,
For 't is not known that we shall see the Morrow.

X.

Yes, when we die the World will be the same,—
Chaotic Darkness reigned not ere he came,—
Our Coming and our Going matters not,
And we shall leave behind nor Trace, nor Name.

XI.

With Swift Destruction are Fate's Arrows fraught,
Nor can this Worldly Wealth avail Thee aught,
The more I ponder on this World I see
The Good is Good, and all the rest is Naught.

XII.

Arise, and for my Heart's Relief I pray
That you will tear the Veil of Fate away.
Quick bring a Cup, and let us drink the Wine,
Ere Fate shall make a Goblet of Our Clay.



Cieco error, tempo avaro, ria fortuna,
Sòrda invidia, vil rabbia, iniquo zelo,
Crudo cor, empio ingegno, strano ardire
Non bastaranno a farmi l' aria bruna,
Non mi porrann' avanti gli occhi il velo,
Non faran mai, ch' il mio bel sol non mire.

—*Giordano Bruno.*

I.

I am as from Thy Crucible I came,
A Base Alloy, and though I feel my shame,
I cannot hope to mend my erring ways,—
'Tis Thine, oh Allah, and not mine, the Blame.

II.

Oh, Thou the Maker art of Wrong and Right,
Whatever is, hath sprung from Thine own Might,
Since I am but a Humble Slave of Thine,
My Sins in Wrath, Thou never wilt requite.

III.

This 'wheel of heaven' in its Fatal Play
Will soon our Breath of Being steal away,—
Come rest thee on this bank, for from our dust
Will spring the Verdure at no distant day.

IV.

From Birth we all are destined for the Tomb,—
The Rose has but a little time to Bloom,—
But what is Life, this Soul-confusing Draught,
That man will drink until the Crack of Doom ?

V.

Why strive to know the Hidden Cause of All ?
Enjoy the Sweet, and bravely take the Gall,
For on this Checkered Board of Life we Men
Are moved by Fate, the Skies our Souls enthrall.

VI.

With Nature's Secrets be thou not perplexed,
Enjoy this World and do not fear the Next,
Ah, sieze this little Breath of Life as Cash,
With That to come, Let not thy Heart be vexed.



Es fürchte die Götter
    Das Menschengeschlecht,
Sie halten die Herrschaft
In Ewigen Händen,
Und können sie brauchen,
Wie's ihnen gefällt.

—*Goethe.*

I.

From all Eternity 't was known to one
The Sovereign Wine Cup I would never shun,
And if I failed to drink this Purple Juice,—
God's boasted Prescience would be undone.

II.

We all are Puppets of the Sky, we run
As wills the Player till the Game is done,
And when the Player wearies of the Sport,
He throws us into Darkness One by One.

III.

Whatever is, by Fate was erst designed,
The Maker now his Labor has resigned,
And all our Striving can avail us Naught,
For all our Acts were long ago defined.

IV.

Yes, since whate'er the Pen of Fate has traced
For Tears of Man will never be erased,
Support thy Ills, do not bemoan thy Lot,
Let all of Fate's Decrees be bravely faced.

V.

'T was Allah who engraved upon my Clay
The Laws I was thereafter to obey,
And will He cast me into Raging Fire
Because my Actions answer to His Sway?



Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux,
Et j' en sais d' immortels qui sont de purs sanglots.

—*Alfred de Musset.*

I.

A Day or two, our sorrows will be o'er,
A little while and then a Parting sore,
But come and taste the Dawn's Sweet breath,—
How oft will Dawn respire, and We no more!

II.

What Eye can see behind the Veil of Fate?
What Man can Nature's Secrets penetrate?—
Although our Life is but a Moment's Halt,—
Oh, that we might its End accelerate.

III.

Life's Caravan unheeded steals away,
And with it passes all our Pleasure, nay,
Fear not the Pain the Future has in Store,—
But drink, upon us steals the Twilight gray.

IV.

Ah, since the World, oh, Love, doth grieve thee so,
And since Thy Soul, forever soon must go,
Thy Fleeting Days among the Roses spend,
Ere long the Roses from Thy Dust will grow.

V.

The Moonlight tears the Robe of Night in twain,
Such Moments wilt Thou henceforth seek in vain,—
When we are gone the Moon will still be bright,
So fill Thy Cup, and all its Sweetness drain.

VI.

Our Life slips from our Grasp, we soon shall swell,
The Ranks of Those who in Death's Kingdom dwell,—
And of Them All not one has e'er returned,
The Secrets of that Peaceful Realm to tell.

VII.

In Earth's Dark Bosom, Myriads of the Best
That She has known, disheartened in their Quest
For Truth, are sleeping, while the Waste of Naught
Is thronged with Those to come, and Those at rest.

VIII.

Ah, since the Future's Riddles none can guess,
Come fill the Cup, the Cup that drowns Distress,
Ah, Love, yon Moon will often rise again,
Will rise and miss us in Her loneliness.

IX.

Before us twain were many Nights and Days,
The Stars have long pursued their Heavenly
ways,—
But tread with Lightest Foot upon this Dust,
T was once an Eye that beamed with Loving
Rays.

X.

Oh that my Face the Brightness of this Wine
Might borrow, and when dead, this Clay of mine,—
I pray Thee wash it with the Grape, then make
My Coffin of the tendrils of the vine.

XI.

Oh that the Soul might leave its Earthen Home
And wing its Flight through Heaven's Mighty
Dome,
What Shame, what Shame, to feel itself confined
Within a tenement of Basest Loam.

XII.

Night's Robe is torn, and Dawn will soon appear,
So fill Thy Cup and quaff the Vintage clear,
How oft will rosy Dawn unveil her Face,
When Thou and I shall be no longer Here?



Fais cet acte de foi dans l' Éternel Génie
De vouloir aujourd'hui ce qu 'il veut aujourd'hui,
Et laisse-toi porter par la Force Infinie.

—*Paul Bourget.*

I.

When I shall bow me at the Feet of Death
And bird-like all my Plumage scattereth,
Make naught but Wine Jars from my Clay, perchance
The Wine's sweet Odor may restore my Breath.

II.

Yes, when my Soul is sunk in Lasting Gloom,
My Body will be placed within the Tomb,
Thereafter man will take my Clay, some Bricks
To mould, to place upon the Grave—of Whom?

III.

With Aristotle wise you may contend,
And Cæsar's Power may e'en transcend,—
But still drink Wine from Jámshed's Cup,[15]
Though Bahrám's self, the Tomb would be your End.

IV.

If Friends of mine you are, come cease your brawl,
Then fill your Cups, and when in Death I fall,
I pray you take my Clay and mould a Brick,
To stop a hole within the Tavern's Wall.[16]

V.

How long, oh, Sáki, shall we ponder o'er
These Fruitless Arguments of Five and Four;[17]
Come, Sáki, tune Thy Harp, we all are Dust,
A Breath of Wind,—Come, fill one Goblet more.

VI.

Mid Wine and Minstrel's Songs I love to dwell,
My Clothes, my Heart, my Soul for Wine I sell,
All Earthly Cares and Griefs I toss aside,
Together with all Thoughts of Heaven and Hell.

VII.

Ah, when Thou camest Here what broughtest Thou?
At Death thou wilt the Earth with All endow,
For Fears of Death Thou hast abjured the Cup,—
But drink or not, thy Death is sure, I trow.

VIII.

And of Them All endowed with Wit and Learning,
And styled by Men 'bright Torch of Wisdom burning,'
Not One has passed a Step beyond the Darkness,
They mused a while, then left, to Sleep returning.

IX.

When first I saw this World of Joy and Pain,
Assailed by Doubts that ever will remain,
I wondered what it meant to live, to die,—
The Question oft I pondered, but in vain.

X.

Fair Heaven's Tent was long since raised, 't was
Then
That Nature's Ways were hid from Human Ken,
Life's Cup the Everlasting Sáki filled
With Millions of these Bubbles, calléd Men.

XI.

Oh, Friend, to Fear why should Thy Thoughts be
lent?
To Earthly Sorrows be indifferent,
For when Thy Cloak of Being shall be rent,
'T will matter not howe'er Thy Life was spent.

XII.

Yes, Friend, since Joy and Youth my Life adorn,
This purple Wine I drink from Night till Morn,
Ah, do not curse this pain annulling Juice,—
You know 'tis all that cheers our Life forlorn.

XIII.

Beneath the Skies each Mortal undergoes
A thousand Griefs, a thousand Heartfelt Woes,
But still Love reigns between the Cup and Flask,
And Lip to Lip pure Blood between them flows.

XIV.

Since Venus and the Moon have cheered the Sky,
Naught have Men seen with Purple Wine to vie;
What half as precious as this sparkling Juice,
Can these same thoughtless Vintners for it buy?[18]

XV.

Yes, Sáki, Time will soon us both o'erthrow,
From this World's Fragile Tent we then must go,
But when a Cup of Wine is in my hand,
I bid farewell to all my heartfelt Woe.

XVI.

Why should Thy Heart with Fears of God be
fraught?
When He designed this World, to Thee no Thought
He gave, Thy hopes of Heaven are not worth
A Moment's Happiness at random Caught.

XVII.

In Praise of Wine and Cup my Moments glide;—
Ah, Faithful Devotee, You boast with pride,
That Wisdom is your only Master here,—
But know you, that myself was Wisdom's Guide.[19]

XVIII.

Come, fill the morning Cup, the Sun is high,
Come tune Thy Harp. asleep Thou shouldst not lie,
The swift and sure return of Tyr and Dai[20]
Has crushed a thousand Kings like Jám and Kai.

XIX.

Yes, when within the Ground my Dust is laid,
And Name and Memory to a Story fade,
Ah, Brother mine, I humbly beg of Thee,
That Drinking Vessels from My Clay be made.

XX.

Away with all that grieves the soul, for soon
We leave this World where Wine the richest Boon
Of Mortals is, a single Draught outvies
Whatever lies, betwixt the Fish and Moon.[21]

XXI.

Yes drink;—how many Lives their Way will wind?—
The Soul will vainly try its Clay to find
When Judgment calls, for this same Skull, the
Seat
Of Joy and Pain, the Potter's Heel will grind.

XXII.

While on this little Earth you humbly crawl,
Drink Wine, the Past you never can recall,
Since Ruin soon will overspread its Face,
In Wine, be you too, ruined once for all.

XXIII.

Whene'er a Cup of crimson Wine I hold,
My Soul seems chained within the Cup of Gold,
And for a Time from earthly Shackles freed,
All Nature's Secrets to my Mind unfold.



"All ephemeral, dead long ago; some have not been remembered even for a short time, and others have become the heroes of fables, and others again have disappeared even from fables."

—*M. Antoninus.*

I.

A Bird upon the crumbling walls of Tús,
Addressed the grinning Skull of Kai-Kaiús;—
"The Rumbling of Thy Drums affright no Ears,
Thy Trumpets now are tarnished from Disuse."

II.

This World is nothing but an Inn decayed,
A transient Resting Place of Light and Shade,
A Banquet which a thousand Jámsheds[22] left, a tomb,
Wherein a thousand Bahrám-Gours are laid.

III.

I chanced a Potter at his Work to meet,
While Heads and Handles for his Vessels neat,
Upon his swiftly turning wheel he shaped;—
From Mouldering Pates of Kings and Beggar's Feet.

IV.

The Potter heeds no silent Tongue's appeal,
His Hands no Tender Mercy ever feel,
Though 'tis Ferídun's[23] Heart,—Kai-Kosrú's Head,
That whirls in Anguish on his rapid Wheel.

V.

A sighing bit of Breathing Clay, this Vase,
Once humbly bowed before a Woman's Face,
This earthen Handle fixed about its Neck,
Did oft in Love a Cypress Form embrace.

VI.

My Manuscript of Youth has dusty grown,
The Roses of My Spring will soon be blown,
The joyful Bird of Youth that hovered near,—
I know not Whence it came, nor Whither flown.

VII.

The Potter deftly shapes his turning Clay,
And knead and mould it with what Skill he may;
He little thinks it once of Human kind,—
The Earth he mangles in his Humor gay.

VIII.

Ah Mignon, Mignon, fill the Crystal Glass,
Though Houris fair in Heaven cannot surpass
Thy Lovliness,—but one short day or two,—
And Thou wilt be no more than Dust, fair lass!

IX.

I saw a Potter at his Work to-day,
With rudest Hand he shaped his yielding Clay,
"Oh gently Brother, do not treat me thus,
I too, was once a Man," I heard it say.

For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

—*James I., 6.*

I.

Within the Labyrinth of Human Creeds,
Of Truth and Wisdom I have sought the Seeds,
By fairest Flowers lured to venture on,
I ne'er have gathered Aught but worthless Weeds.

II.

The Ways of God are veiled from Human Ken,
Yes, Night and Day, 'tis three score years and ten,
That I have pondered o'er them,—but in vain,—
My Thoughts have ne'er been cleared by Tongue or Pen.

III.

The Mosque, the Kaaba,—'tis a Prison Cell,—
A Chain, the Chimes that from the Steeple swell,
The Rosary, the Mehrab,[24] and the Church,
Are like the Cross, all Signs of Slavery fell.

IV.

Oh Thou hast made us Slaves to Passion's Sway,—
Although our Master we must ne'er obey;—
But tell me this, how can we tip the Jar,
And still not let its Contents run away?

V.

When lost in Darkness Stars and Skies shall be,
My Soul, released, will wing its flight to Thee,
And it will ask, Oh God of Righteousness,
Why takest Thou the Life Thou Gavest me?

VI.

For Three Score Years within the School of Life,
I heard the Wrangling and the Endless Strife
About this World and That to Come,—and
learned,—
That all their Schemes with Errors Base were rife!

VII.

Ah Brother, but a little while, and Thou shalt find
Thy Lasting Home the 'Secret Veil' behind;—
Rejoice Thy Heart and banish Grief, for know;—
Thy Source, Thy Goal, has never been defined.

VIII.

What man believes that He who made the Vase
Will sometime shatter it in Anger base?
The Maker of these weak misguided Men,
Will surely not in Wrath His Works efface.

IX.

Oh Khájah[25] Grant a single Wish I pray,
Point out the Road that leads to God,—but nay,—
My Steps have found the Narrow Path aright,
And Thou it is, who wandereth from the way.

X.

From Faith to Disbelief is but a Breath,
From Doubt to Faith, but one, the Dervish saith,
Come gaily let us pass our fleeting Days,—
A Little While then cometh the Angel Death.

XI.

This azure vaulted Heaven, a Despot sore,
Of all the Problems that we ponder o'er,
Not One has solved; whene'er it finds a Heart
In Grief 'tis sure to add one Sorrow more.

XII.

This Universe is but a Mantle worn,
The Jehun[26] from our flooding Tears is born,
And Hell a fire ignited by our Griefs,
And Heaven a respite from our Life forlorn.



Le Déiste contemple un pur je ne sais quoi,
Lointain, par qui le monde, en s'ordonnant, commence;
Et le savant, qui rit de leur sainte démence,
Nomme son Dieu Nature et n'en fait qu'une loi.

Ainsi roulent toujours, du neant aux idoles,
Du blasphème aux credo, les multitudes folles,
Dieu n'est pas rien, mais Dieu n'est personne; il est Tout.

—*Sully Prudhomme.*

I.

This Spirit which the Universe contains,
Shines in the Rose, then in the Lion reigns,
Although the Outward Forms may pass away,
The Spirit still remains, yes still remains.

II.

At times Thou art concealed, and then anon
Thy subtle Essence casteth Thou upon
All Things Existent twixt the Earth and Moon;
Thou art the Player and the Looker-on.

III.

What may this Moving Panorama be?
Ah would that I could tell it all to Thee;
'Tis Something tossed up by the boundless Vast,
That will return to that same Unknown Sea.

IV.

A Turning Magic Lantern Shown this World,
Around the Sun as Candle swiftly whirled,
While Mortals are but Phantom Figures traced
Upon the Shade, forever Onward hurled.

V.

Oh would there were a Place unknown to care,
And that our Weary Road might take us there;—
So after many Years, we might burst forth
Again, as bud in Spring the Roses fair.

VI.

This Universe is but a Body old
Which doth the Right,[27] as Deathless Spirit hold,
While Elements and Skies and Men,
Are Parts of One, Whose Laws the Whole enfold.



The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made.

—*Edmund Waller.*

I.

In vainly seeking Thee no Rest we find,
But in and out the Labyrinth we wind
Though every Tree and Rock proclaimeth Thy
Name
And Work, our Ears are Deaf, our Eyes are blind.

II.

Oh Allah, grant my Captive Heart Thy Rest,
Be merciful unto my grief-torn Breast,
Forgive these Feet which lead me to the Inn,
Forgive this Hand which takes the Vine's
Bequest.[28]

III.

Unlock the Door, Oh Allah, Thine is the Key.
Thy Hand reach forth and deign to succor me.
To Human Aid I will not trust myself,
For All will perish, saving only Thee.

IV.

I am, just as Thy Hand my nature cast,
Mid countless Benefits my Life has passed,
And now I fain would know if Sins of mine,
Can overthrow Thy Mercy at the Last.

V.

The Two and Seventy Wrangling Sects contend,
And ever strive their Crumbling Creeds to mend,
But I have cast them, One and All away,
And Thou, Oh Allah, art my only End.

VI.

Allah no Profit from my Homage hath,
And though I oft have strayed from Virtue's Path,
'T will matter not, He will forgive I know,
For He is quick to Pardon, slow to Wrath.

VII.

Till When these thoughts of what is Thine or
Mine?
Shall I my Life to Joy or Grief resign?
'T will not be known until my Spirit flies,
Whether the Life I live, is Mine or Thine.

VIII.

Lives there a Man who breaketh no Decree?—
And if I err 'tis writ Thou chasteneth Me,—
What, if I sin and in return Thou strikest,—
What is the difference between Me and Thee?

IX.

At times to some frail earthen Vase we turn,
Again we seize the Book some Truth to Learn;
Our Lives are neither wholly Good nor Bad,
Oh thinkest Thou that we fore'er shall burn?

X.

Ádína[29] is reserved for Fast,—but stay,
Why should'st Thou put the Cup and Flask away?
I know the Grape is then forbidden, but—
Worship Omnipotence, and not the Day.

XI.

Ah do not think the Skies our Souls enthrall,
The Griefs, the Joys that to us Mortals fall,
Come not from Thence, nor are they known to
Fate,
Heaven is far more helpless than us all.

XII.

Oh thou who pratest of Hell's Eternal Fire
And threatens the Man who sins with Anger dire,
How canst thou pardon Omar's faults, to God's
Prerogative how darest thou aspire?



Ven, muerte, tan escondida,
Que no te sienta venir,
Porque el placer del morir
No me buelva á dar la vida.

—*Escriva*

"Come Death, but gently come and still;—
All sound of thine approach restrain,
Lest joy of thee my heart should fill
And turn it back to life again."

I.

Within the Maze of Human Faith and Doubt
I erst while loved to wander round about,
But No One have I met the Way to clear,
And through the Entrance Door I passed Without.

II.

Forget the Day Old Time has ta'en from thee,
From Thoughts of the Morrow thou e'er shouldst flee,
Build not on That to Come, on That Long Passed,
Lose not thy Life, though bright it may not be.

III.

How Long will Reason's Chains oppress my Soul?
What boots it whether One Day or Hundreds roll
Above my Head, come fill the Cup, My Clay
The Potter soon will shape into a Bowl.

IV.

Last Night into a Potter's Shop I strayed,
Where Jars and Pots a many were displayed,
And All cried out: where is the Potter now,
And those who bought and sold, where are they
laid?

V.

I dreamed a Sage exclaimed to me, "Oh Son
In Sleep, 'the Rose of Fortune' blooms for none,
Why sleep, when Sleep is but a Twin to Death?—
Ah Thou shalt sleep enough when Life is done."

VI.

Oh grind My dust when dead with Might and
Main,
And thus my Loss will be my Fellow's Gain,
Then take my Dust and knead with Wine a Jar,
That sometime shall that self-same Wine contain.

VII.

What Profit from our Coming and our Going?
And from the Seed of Hope that we are sowing?—
Ah, Where are Those who lived and passed
away?
Their whereabouts transcends all Human Knowing.

VIII.

Khayyám, your body is a Tent, your Soul,
A Sultan, destined to an Unknown Goal;
The Dread Ferrásh[30] of Doom destroys the Tent,
The Moment when the Sultan's Summons toll.

IX.

Khayyám, who stitched the Tents of Wisdom's
Lore,
Is fallen in the Pit and covered o'er;
Death's Shears have cut the Tent-ropes of his
Life,
The World has cast him out as worthless Store.[31]

# Notes.

# NOTES.

1. Sáki, the Persian word for Cup-Bearer.

2. Daughter of the Vine, a favorite simile with the Persian poets.

3. The force of this last line is lost in English, *ku* being an abbreviation for the Persian word *kuja*, where.

4. See Note 22.

5. A satire on the Mohammedan Paradise. Koran, LVI. "Youths which shall continue in their bloom forever, shall go round about to attend them with goblets and beakers and a cup of flowing wine; their heads shall not ache by drinking the same, neither shall their reason be disturbed, and with fruits of the sorts which they shall choose, and the flesh of the birds which they shall desire, and there shall accompany them fair damsels having large black eyes, resembling pearls hidden in their shells, as a reward for that which they shall have wrought."

6. Koran, Chapter XX., T. II.; Exodus, IV., 6; the branches becoming white with buds in spring, are compared with Moses' hand, 'Leprous as snow.'

7. According to the Persian cosmogony the world, at that time, was seven thousand years old.

8. Balkh and Naishápúr, the latter Omar's birthplace, are two towns in Khorassan.

9. The meaning of this quatrain is not obvious; some have believed it to be addressed by the poet to his own soul, while others have given it a more material signification. It recalls Adrian's 'Animula! vagula, blandula.'

10. Ramazán, the ninth Arabic month, is devoted to fasting.

11. Humanity, according to the Persians, is divided into seventy-two sects.

12. The Mohammedans, in general, admit the miracles of Jesus Christ, attributing to him the power of resuscitating the dead with his breath. They, however, place him below Mohammed. The Súfis place him on an equality with God, regarding him as a Súfi who had attained the degree of the 'Supreme Beatitude,' and, consequently, having the power of performing all miracles.

13. Copper drinking vessels, with verses in praise of wine engraved on the rim, are frequently met with in Persia.

14. Tús, an uncle of Kai-Kaiús, the latter the second king of the Kaianian Dynasty, was successor to Kobád, its founder. Tús is also the name of a town in Persia.

15. The Cup of Jám occupies a place in Persian poetry similar to that of the Holy Grail in mediæval romances.

16. This stanza is not altogether dissimilar to Shakespeare's:—

Imperial Cæsar dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
O that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw.

17. The Four Elements and the Five Senses.

18. Kisái, one of the earlier Persian poets, has a somewhat similar quatrain, which may be translated:—

The rose is a gift from Eden's bower,
Our minds in the garden grow nobler far;
Why does the rose dealer sell his flower?
What is more precious than roses are?

19. Referring to his scientific accomplishments.

20. Tyr and Dai, April and December, two months of the Solar year, according to the calender used by the Iranians before Islam.

21. From Máh to Máhi, from fish to moon, *i. e.*, between the fish which supports the bull, that, according to Persian cosmogony, bears the earth on one of his horns, and the moon; the saying, which is equivalent to the expression 'everything in the universe' is common with the Iranians.

22. Jámshed was the fifth king of the mythical Peshdadian dynasty. His real name was Jám, which means 'king'; Shed was added on account of the beauty of his person and of his brilliant deeds. He is said to have been the founder of Persepolis, and the invention of wine is, by some Persian historians, attributed to him. Bahrám Gour was a member of the Sassanian dynasty; the name Gour, which means 'wild ass,' was given him on account of his foundness for hunting that animal, a passion which cost him his life. The word Gour, which also means 'tomb,' gives the original a force which is lost in English.

23. Feridun was the second king of the second, or Peshdadian dynasty. By the Persians he was regarded as a hero and a model to be copied by all potentates. Almost all the Iranian poets have sung his valor, liberality and justice. Kai-Kosru was the second king of the Kaianian dynasty.

24. Mehrab, a Mohammedan chair placed in Mosques, and always turned towards the East.

25. Khájah, an orthodox Mussulman.

26. The Jehun, the Oxus.

27. *Hakk*, the Arabic word for 'truth, justice, right,' is one of the 'ninety and nine names of Allah,' Al-Hakk the truth.

28. According to M. Nicolas, a satire apropos of the Day of Judgment. The poet, by this prayer in favor of his different members, calls to mind that God has nothing to accord, and nothing for which to pardon matter, which has become inert

after its separation from the soul, which has again entered, the Súfis say, into the Divine Essence.

29. Adína is the Mohammedan Friday.

30. Ferrásh, a Persian body-servant, who accompanies his master on journeys, setting up his tent, etc., etc.

31. A quaint quatrain, referring to his poetical name of the 'tent-maker.'

